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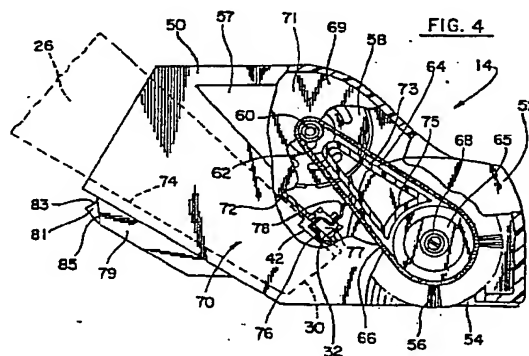
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54 Vacuum cleaner.

57 A cordless vacuum cleaner (12) having a dust bowl (26) is provided with a power brush attachment (14) comprising a cylindrical brush (56) and an electrical motor (58). Co-operating electrical contacts (42, 42', 76, 76') in the power brush attachment (14) and the dust bowl (26) connect the electric motor (58) in the power brush attachment (14) for concerted operation with a vacuum cleaner motor (122) in the cordless vacuum cleaner (12). Co-operating latch members (92, 86) in the dust bowl (26) and the power brush attachment (14) enable snapping the two elements together and facilitate their separation. Clam-shell construction of the power brush attachment (14) is utilized to accept parts of the latch members (92) and a contact retainer supporting both electrical contacts (76, 76') for application of power from the cordless vacuum cleaner (12) to the power brush attachment (14). An integrated base (184) provides means for retaining both the cordless vacuum cleaner (12) and the power brush attachment (14).



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Description

VACUUM CLEANER

This invention relates to vacuum cleaners.

Vacuum cleaners generally comprise a fan operative to produce a partial vacuum at an intake. Air and entrained dirt sucked in by the partial vacuum passes through a filter bag, whereby the dirt particles are removed from the air stream. The filtered air is then returned to the environment.

An example of such a vacuum cleaner is disclosed in US Patent No. 4,209,875 and is sold by Black & Decker under the trademark DUSTBUSTER.

This type of vacuum cleaner is most suited to removing dust, dirt and hair from hard surfaces such as, for example, wood or tile. Dust, dirt and hair found on a carpet or fabric may adhere so strongly thereto that a vacuum-only cleaner may be incapable of satisfactory cleaning.

According to one aspect of the present invention there is provided a vacuum cleaner comprising a vacuum cleaner motor, a dust bowl having an air flow passage for the intake of air and dirt, and an attachment characterized in that said attachment comprises means for agitating a surface to be cleaned, an electric motor for driving said means, and connecting means for removably connecting said attachment to said vacuum cleaner in a manner such that said air inlet opening is positioned in a substantially fixed predetermined position with respect to said attachment and further characterized in that co-operating electrical connection means are provided for connecting said electric motor for concerted operation with said vacuum cleaner motor.

According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided an assembly for retaining an element comprising:

- first and second facing end surfaces;
- first and second wheels;
- said first and second wheels each including a hub and a flexible rim attached thereto;
- means for permitting substantial radial deflection of said rim;
- contacting means extending between hubs on said first and second wheels;
- said contacting means being effective for maintaining said first and second wheels at least a minimum distance apart;
- each of said first and second facing end surfaces including at least one retainer arm and a hub guide;
- said hub guide including means for permitting insertion of said hub predetermined distance along its respective end surface and for preventing further insertion;
- said retainer arm including means for deflecting said rim radially inward as said hub is inserted into said hub guide; and
- said hub guide being positioned and dimensioned to permit partial outward expansion of said rim when hub is disposed said predetermined distance along its end surface whereby said wheel is captured.

According to a further aspect of the invention there is provided an electrical contact assembly,

comprising first and second separable parts which can be assembled face to face at a seam;

a slot in at least one of said first and second separable parts;

said slot terminating at said seam;

a contact retainer;

said slot and said contact retainer including means for mutual sliding engagement whereby said contact retainer is captured in said slot when said first and second separable parts are assembled;

gripping means at at least one end of said contact retainer for gripping a metallic conductor; and

an end of said metallic conductor forming said electrical contact.

For a better understanding of the present invention reference will now be made, by way of example, to the accompanying drawings, in which:-

Fig. 1 is a perspective view showing a cordless vacuum cleaner and a power brush attachment therefore; shown prior to attachment;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the cordless vacuum cleaner with the power brush attachment mounted thereon;

Fig. 3 is a cross section taken along line III-III of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a side view, partly cut away, of the power brush attachment of Figs. 1 and 2 and showing part of the vacuum cleaner in dotted lines;

Fig. 5 is a fragmentary top view of the power brush attachment of Figs. 1 and 2 with the location of major internal components indicated in dashed lines;

Fig. 6 is a bottom view of a portion of the cordless vacuum cleaner with the power brush attachment showing the latch member for retaining the cordless vacuum cleaner and the power brush attachment in the connected condition;

Fig. 7 is a cross section taken along line VII-VII of Fig. 6;

Fig. 8 is a view taken inside a portion of the power brush attachment looking toward upper wall halves separated to illustrate the manner in which a contact retainer is installed;

Fig. 9 is a view taken along line IX-IX of Fig. 8 with a contact retainer installed;

Fig. 10 is a view inside the brush housing of Fig. 1 looking toward one end thereof with intervening elements removed for purposes of illustration;

Fig. 11 is a cross section taken along line XI-XI of Fig. 10 with additional elements added in exploded form to show relationships to which reference will be made in describing the embodiment;

Fig. 12 is a cross section taken along line XII-XII of Fig. 11;

Fig. 13 is a view corresponding to Fig. 10 with the flex-rim wheel installed in its stable position

but with other intervening elements removed for illustration;

Fig. 14 is a side view of significant portions of an integrated base for containing the cordless vacuum cleaner and power brush attachment and showing the power brush attachment about to be mounted thereon; and

Fig. 15 is an electrical schematic diagram of the cordless vacuum cleaner with power brush attachment.

Referring to Fig. 1, there is shown, generally at 10, a cordless vacuum cleaner 12 with a power brush attachment 14.

The cordless vacuum cleaner 12 includes a power unit 16 having a body 18 to which a handle 20 is affixed. Handle 20 contains rechargeable batteries (not shown). A power switch 22 is disposed on body 18 in a position making it accessible to a person holding cordless vacuum cleaner 12 by handle 20. Power switch 22 is conveniently a spring-loaded switch normally biased into the OFF condition and urged to the ON position by pressure of the user's thumb or finger. Actuation of power switch 22 operates an internal motor driving a fan (not shown) within body 18. A set of louvers 24 about the perimeter of body 18 permit exit of air driven by the internal fan.

A dust bowl 26 snaps sealingly onto the forward end of body 18 where it is retained by a spring latch 28. An air inlet opening 30 at a forward end of dust bowl 26 permits the entry of air, and entrained dirt, into dust bowl 26. A filter (not shown) inside dust bowl 26 retains the dirt within dust bowl 26 while the air is discharged through louvers 24. First and second contact notches 32 and 34 are disposed in an upper surface 36 of dust bowl 26 adjacent air inlet opening 30.

Referring now to Fig. 3, an integral nozzle 38 defines an air flow passage 40, only a portion of which is shown, leading into dust bowl 26. A metallic contact 42 is disposed adjacent an external surface 44 of integral nozzle 38 within first contact notch 32. A sealing wall 46 extends upward from external surface 44 toward metallic contact 42. A bent end portion 47 on metallic contact 42 is fitted into a slot 49 of sealing wall 46 to stabilize metallic contact 42 and to prevent a bypass flow of air into dust bowl 26. An electrical conductor 48 provides electrical communication between metallic contact 42 and power switch 22 (Figs. 1 and 2).

Second contact notch 34 is identical to first contact notch 32 and thus is not further detailed. It is preferred that at least one electrical path to metallic contact 42 in first contact notch 32 or second contact notch 34 is insulated in its internal path through dust bowl 26 in order to avoid accidental short circuiting of power when dust bowl 26 contains metallic objects such as, for example, steel wool, staples, and the like. Making electrical conductor 48 of wire having insulation thereon is satisfactory. In one embodiment, electrical conductor 48 is replaced by a flat ribbon of metal (not shown) which may be, for example, a continuation of metallic contact 42 passing internally through dust bowl 26. At least one, and preferably both of such flat ribbons of metal are

covered with an insulating material such as, for example, a plastic layer (not shown). The plastic layer may be, for example, a plastic sleeve, slipped over the metallic ribbon before final assembly. Alternatively, the plastic layer may be coated as a liquid onto the metallic ribbon and cured in place to form the required coating of insulating material.

Referring again also to Figs. 1 and 2, electrical conductors 48 from first and second contact notches 32 and 34 are connected to power switch 22 and to the internal batteries (not shown) in handle 20 by any convenient means. In one embodiment of the invention, electrical conductors 48 are connected directly to the elements in body 18. A service loop (not shown) in electrical conductors 48 permits removal of dust bowl 26 from body 18 for emptying dirt. In a further embodiment, electrical connections between dust bowl 26 and body 18 are made by electrical contacts between these elements which are resiliently engaged by the act of attaching dust bowl 26 to body 18. In the present embodiment, a pair of openings in the bottom of dust bowl 26 are entered by a mating pair of projections for assisting in the stable attachment of dust bowl 26 to body 18. Electrical contacts (not shown) aligned with the openings and projections are employed to provide the desired automatic electrical connection when dust bowl 26 is affixed to body 18.

Power brush attachment 14 includes a motor cover 50 integrally formed with a brush housing 52. Motor cover 50 and brush housing 52 may be made of any convenient material, but are preferably made of a molded plastic material such as, for example, polypropylene. A brush opening 54 extends across substantially the entire width of brush housing 52 to reveal a cylindrical brush 56. An access door 57 in motor cover 50 (Fig. 2) provides access for attaching an internal belt (not shown in Fig. 2) and for cleaning a belt drive mechanism, to be more fully detailed hereinafter.

Referring now to Figs. 4 and 5, an electric motor 58 in motor cover 50 includes a motor shaft 60 having a toothed pulley 62 thereon. A flexible toothed drive belt 64 passes over toothed pulley 62 and over a toothed band 66 on cylindrical brush 56. A shaft 68 passing through a brush spindle 65 of cylindrical brush 56 rotatably supports cylindrical brush 56, whereby cylindrical brush 56 may be concertedly driven by electric motor 58. An inner wall 69 between electric motor 58 and flexible toothed drive belt 64 forms a drive belt chamber 71 for isolating dirt and contaminants loosened by power brush attachment 14 from entry into electric motor 58 wherein they may cause damage. A belt guide 73, preferably integrally formed on an inside surface of access door 57, is disposed within the run of flexible toothed drive belt 64 between toothed pulley 62 and toothed band 66. A curved dirt-stripper portion 75 on belt guide 73 is disposed closely adjacent toothed band 66. Curved dirt-stripper portion 75 has a curvature substantially matching the curvature of toothed band 66. The close proximity of curved dirt-stripper portion 75 to toothed band 66 strips larger particles of dirt from toothed band 66 and/or flexible toothed drive belt 64 before they are carried

into drive belt chamber 71 wherein they could interfere with free operation of power brush attachment 14. When access door 57 is removed, belt guide 73, removed with it, clears drive belt chamber 71 to enable cleaning of dirt from drive belt chamber 71 or reeving of flexible toothed drive belt 64 onto motor shaft 60.

An attachment portion 70 of motor cover 50 includes an opening having an upper wall 72 and a lower wall 74 spaced and angled to embrace a forward portion of dust bowl 26, shown in dashed line. When dust bowl 26 is seated in attachment portion 70, air inlet opening 30 thereof is positioned at brush opening 54 just behind cylindrical brush 56. Rotation of cylindrical brush 56 in the clockwise direction in Fig. 4 tends to agitate a surface being cleaned and to hurl loosened dirt toward and into air inlet opening 30 as is desired.

It will be clear to one skilled in the art that alternative means for providing agitation of the surface being cleaned could be substituted for cylindrical brush 56.

A pair of electrical contacts 76 (only one of which is shown) are supported on opposed ends of a contact retainer 77 to enter first and second contact notches 32 and 34 (only first contact notch 32 is shown) into contact with respective metallic contacts 42 therein. Each electrical contact 76 is connected to a respective electrical conductor 78 leading to electric motor 58. Thus, insertion of dust bowl 26 into attachment portion 70 completes electrical contact between these elements.

Instead of employing automatic connection of power to electric motor 58 as shown and described, an embodiment of the invention is contemplated wherein electrical connection is completed manually using, for example, a conventional electrical plug attached to one of the elements and a conventional mating socket attached to the other (neither of which is shown). The plug and/or socket may be optionally attached using a pendant cord (not shown).

A latch compartment 79, whose internal structure is detailed later, depends from a lower surface of attachment portion 70. A latch tang 81, having a camming surface 83 thereon, is centred transversely in a rear surface 85 of latch compartment 79.

As best seen in Fig. 5, the placement of internal components in power brush attachment 14 is indicated in dashed lines. Balance is important in a hand-held device. Electrical motor 58 represents a significant concentrated weight in power brush attachment 14 which, if offset to one side, would upset the desired balance. Electric motor 58 therefore is centred in the overall width of power brush attachment 14. Cylindrical brush 56 extends a substantial distance beyond the ends of electric motor 58. Toothed band 66 is disposed on brush spindle 65 spaced inward from the end thereof for engagement with flexible toothed drive belt 64 running directly to it from motor shaft 60.

Power brush attachment 14 is preferably formed of mating halves joined at a mating line 87. Such clam-shell construction facilitates efficient assembly of internal parts by rapid manual, drop-in techniques.

Specific advantage is taken of this construction in embodiments of the present invention as will be disclosed hereinafter.

Referring now to Figs. 6 and 7, a lower surface 80 of dust bowl 26 includes a camming surface 83 molded therein. Latch compartment 79 includes a pocket 84 having an opening 86 facing lower surface 80 of dust bowl 26, when in the assembled condition illustrated. A retainer boss 88 is spaced from a facing surface 90 adjacent opening 86. A latch bar 92 includes a thickened clamping portion 94 sized for an interference fit between retainer boss 88 and facing surface 90. A resilient cantilevered portion 96 connects thickened clamping portion 94 to a latch cam 98 extending through opening 86.

It will be noted that motor cover 50 contains surface shading since the illustrated view is taken at mating line 87 (Fig. 6), whereas latch bar 92 is hatched, indicating a cross section. Latch bar 92 is assembled by slipping it into pocket 84 with thickened clamping portion 94 being gripped between retainer boss 88 and facing surface 90. An end of latch bar 92 protrudes from the plane of the page for capture in a corresponding portion of pocket 84 in the other mating half of power brush attachment 14. This permits placing latch bar 92 in position in one half of power brush attachment 14 with its entry into the other half of power brush attachment 14 being accomplished when the two halves of power brush attachment 14 are mated. One or more convenient locating devices (not shown) may be provided for retaining latch bar 92 in the longitudinal direction. For example, a groove (not shown) may be formed in each end of thickened clamping portion 94 and a mating boss (also not shown) may be molded into the halves of pocket 84.

Power brush attachment 14 is affixed to dust bowl 26 by sliding attachment portion 70 into the opening in motor cover 50. Resilient cantilevered portion 96 provides sufficient resilience to permit latch cam 98 to be depressed during insertion until latch cam 98 enters transverse locking notch 82. Thereafter, springback of resilient cantilevered portion 96 resiliently urges latch cam 98 into the mated position shown in transverse locking notch 82. The cooperating shapes of transverse locking notch 82 and latch cam 98, combined with the resilient urging applied to latch cam 98 tends to retain the mated condition against force urging them apart during normal use. During removal, sufficient force is applied to power brush attachment 14 and dust bowl 26 to cam latch cam 98 downward while pulling power brush attachment 14 off dust bowl 26.

Contact retainer 77 is also hatched indicating that similar drop-in assembly techniques are employed for this element as well.

Referring now to Figs. 8 and 9, wherein corresponding elements are indicated by reference numeral and primed reference numeral, upper wall halves 72 and 72' include facing slots 100 and 100', respectively. Where elements in upper wall 72' are not specifically discussed, it may be assumed that they are mirror images of corresponding elements in upper wall 72. First and second tongues 102 and 103 extend transversely from contact retainer 77 into

grooves 104 and 105, respectively, in upper wall 72. As best seen in Fig. 9, groove 104 is formed by an inner surface of upper wall 72 and a rib 106 molded at a position spaced therefrom a distance appropriate to accommodate tongue 102. Similarly, groove 105 is formed by the inner surface of upper wall 72 and a further rib 107. A central rib 108 is centred in slot 100 and spaced inward therefrom a distance effective to contact a rear surface of contact retainer 77 near its centre.

A nest 109 is formed at each end of contact retainer 77 by a plurality of bosses 110, 111, 112 and 113 relatively positioned to retain electrical contact 76 firmly and to permit resilient deflection of a contact portion 114 thereof. Electrical contact 76 is preferably a formed flat strip of a resilient metal such as, for example, beryllium bronze. A straight clamping run 115 of electrical contact 76 is connected at one end to electrical conductor 78 and passes between bosses 110 and 111 abutting one surface thereof and bosses 112 and 113 abutting the opposed surface thereof. It will be noted that bosses 110, 111, 112 and 113 are spaced apart longitudinally and staggered transversely so that boss 112, contacting one surface of straight clamping run 115, faces a gap between bosses 110 and 111 contacting the opposed surface thereof. The transverse spacing between planes of surfaces contacting the opposed surfaces of straight clamping run 115 may be slightly less than the thickness of straight clamping run 115. Similarly, boss 111 faces a gap between bosses 112 and 113 and these elements have a corresponding spacing between the planes of contact too narrow to permit passage of straight clamping run 115 therethrough without deforming straight clamping run 115 slightly from its straight run.

An end turn 116 is connected from an end of straight clamping run 115 to an end of a return run 117 spaced outward from bosses 112 and 113. Contact portion 114 is connected to the other end of return run 117.

It will be recognized from Fig. 8 that the centre-to-centre spacing of electrical contacts 76 and 76', and their positions with respect to upper wall halves 72 and 72', are fully determined by contact retainer 77. The act of positioning one end of contact retainer 77 in slot 100, and inserting the other end into slot 100' when the two halves of upper wall halves 72 and 72' are mated takes care of all required alignment of electrical contacts 76 and 76'.

Referring now to Fig. 10, an inside view of brush housing 52 is shown looking toward an end 128 thereof. Cylindrical brush 56, and other elements are removed in this view for clarity of illustration. Reference should also be made to Fig. 11 during the following description. It will be understood that a mirror image of the apparatus illustrated and described is disposed in the other end of motor cover 50 but, since the shape and function of such mirror image will be fully understood from the following description, it will not be described separately.

First and second retainer arms 130 and 132, integrally molded with end 128, are angled slightly

toward each other. An upper end of retainer arm 130 permits guide rod 164 to pass therethrough and facilitates relative rotation therebetween. An end portion 176 of guide rod 164 is sized for insertion into blind hold 160 with a slot 178 fitting onto septum 162. A flange 180 on bushing 172 is recessed within counterbore 170 to provide an annular guide recess 182 having a diameter to accept guide disk 158 of flex-rim wheel 146 therein when the elements in Fig. 12 are fitted together in their operational positions.

Referring as necessary to Figs. 10-13, to install cylindrical brush 56 in brush housing 52, a flex-rim wheel 146 is placed on each end of guide rod 164. In this condition, end portion 176 at each end of guide rod 164 are inserted into their respective blind hole 160. The lengths of brush spindle 65 and guide rod 164 are such that this positioning places guide disk 158 of each flex-rim wheel 146 abutting ends of brush spindle 65. In one embodiment, in the described condition, each guide disk 158 guidingly enters its respective annular guide recess 182.

The lengths of brush spindle 65 and guide rod 164 are also effective to position both flex-rim wheels 146 at axial locations wherein ring 156 on each is disposed for abutment with inner surfaces of outwardly angled portion 136 and part-circular back-up rib 144. Hub 154 on each flex-rim wheel 146 extends between legs of hairpin-shaped hub guide 138. Brush spindle 65 is installed by pressing each flex-rim wheel 146 upward until it locks in place with hub 154 resting against part-circular hub retainer 140 with the axis of hub 154 co-located with centre 142 (Fig. 10). An outside diameter of rim 150 is greater than the distance between retainer arms 130 and 132 at their closest approach. Rim 150 is deflected resiliently inward as it moves over-centre past the point of closest approach and then expands slightly into stable contact with outwardly angled portions 134 and 136. The small number of spokes 152, and their diagonal orientation, contributes to the required resiliency of rim 150. A sufficient amount of resilient deformation of rim 150 is maintained in the stable position to prevent rotation of flex-rim wheel 146 during operation of power brush attachment 14. Engagement between septum 162 and slot 178 at each end of guide rod 164 retains guide rod 164 in the non-rotating condition. Thus, rotation is constrained to cylindrical brush 56 with a bushing 172 contacting guide rod 164 near each end of cylindrical brush 56.

Referring now to Fig. 14, an integrated base 184 includes means for storing cordless vacuum cleaner 12 and power brush attachment 14. For present purposes, it may be considered that elements to the left of a vertical dashed line 186 correspond generally to a vacuum-cleaner base of the prior art and may contain an AC-to-DC converter with the necessary co-operating interface elements between it and cordless vacuum cleaner 12 for charging the internal batteries therein.

To the right of vertical dashed line 186, a power brush base assembly 188 includes a horizontal floor 190 and a sloped floor 192 within a perimeter wall 194 generally sized, shaped and angled to accept and

support the bottom of power brush attachment 14 therein.

A pocket 196 in power brush base assembly 188 retains a resilient latch member 198 extending upward beyond sloped floor 192. A front wall 200 of perimeter wall 194 includes an inward-pointing protuberance 202. A depression 204 which may be, for example, part of a decorative trim of brush housing 52, is positioned for engagement with inward-pointing protuberance 202.

To mount power brush attachment 14 in power brush base assembly 188, the right end of power brush attachment 14 is tilted downward while depression 204 is moved into engagement with inward-pointing protuberance 202. Then the left end of power brush attachment 14 is lowered until latch tang 81 deflects resilient latch member 198 and thereafter resilient latch member 198 is resiliently urged into stable retaining contact with camming surface 83.

Referring now to Fig. 15, power unit 16 includes a battery 120 having one of its terminals permanently connected to one terminal of a vacuum cleaner motor 122. The other terminal of battery 120 is connected to one terminal of power switch 22. The other terminal of power switch 22 is connected to a second terminal of vacuum cleaner motor 122. First and second connectors 124 and 126 connect electrical conductors 48 in dust bowl 26 to the terminals of vacuum cleaner motor 122. Metallic contacts 42 and electrical contacts 76 connect electrical conductors 48 to electrical conductors 78 in power brush attachment 14. Electrical conductors 78 are, in turn, connected to terminals of electric motor 58. As can be seen, electric motor 58 is effectively connected in parallel with vacuum cleaner motor 122, whereby energizing vacuum cleaner motor 122 by closing power switch 22 also energizes electric motor 58.

It should be understood that the parallel connection of power to electric motor 58 and vacuum cleaner motor 122 upon closure of power switch 22 is not a required limitation. For example, series connection may be desirable in some application. Furthermore, power switch 22 may include means (not shown) for permitting operator selection of parallel and series connection of vacuum cleaner motor 122 and electric motor 58. Applications may be contemplated in which it is desirable to disable one of vacuum cleaner motor 122 and electric motor 58 while operating the other. For example, it may be desired to operate power brush attachment 14 for dressing a surface without operation of vacuum cleaner motor 122. Suitable modification of power switch 22, in a manner well known to those skilled in the art may be performed to enable operation in such modified ways.

Claims

1. A vacuum cleaner (12) comprising a vacuum cleaner motor (122), a dust bowl (26) having an air flow passage (40) for the intake of

air and dirt, and an attachment (14) characterized in that said attachment (14) comprises means (56) for agitating a surface to be cleaned, an electric motor (58) for driving said means (56), and connecting means (92) for removably connecting said attachment (14) to said vacuum cleaner (12) in a manner such that said air inlet opening is positioned in a substantially fixed predetermined position with respect to said attachment (14), and further characterized in that co-operating electrical connection means (42, 76; 42', 76') are provided for connecting said electric motor (58) for concerted operation with said vacuum cleaner motor (122).

2. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to Claim 1, characterized in that said dust bowl (26) has an upper wall and a lower wall (80), and said attachment (14) includes an upper wall (72) and a lower wall (74) which co-operate with the upper wall and lower wall (80) respectively of said dust bowl (26) to locate said attachment (14) with respect to said dust bowl (26).

3. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that said electrical connection means includes first and second electrical contact members (42, 42') on said dust bowl (26) and third and fourth electrical contact members (76, 76') on said attachment (14); means for biasing said first and third electrical contact members (42, 76) together into electrical contact when said attachment (14) is connected to said vacuum cleaner (12); and means for biasing said second and fourth electrical contact members (42', 76') together into electrical contact when said attachment (14) is connected to said vacuum cleaner (12).

4. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to Claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein said electric motor (58) is disposed centrally within said attachment (14) to facilitate lateral balance.

5. A vacuum cleaner according to any preceding Claim, characterized in that said vacuum cleaner (12) comprises a power unit (16) which contains said vacuum cleaner motor (122), said dust bowl (26) is detachably mounted on said power unit (16) and said dust bowl (26) and said power unit (16) are provided with electrical connectors (124, 126) which engage when said dust bowl (26) is mounted on said power unit (16).

6. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to any preceding Claim, characterized in that it includes a drive belt (64) which connects said electric motor (58) to said agitating means (56).

7. A vacuum cleaner according to Claim 6, wherein said agitating means (56) comprises a cylindrical brush, said electric motor (58) has a toothed pulley (62), said cylindrical brush has a toothed band (66), and said drive belt (64) comprises a toothed drive belt which drivably engages said toothed pulley (62) and said

toothed band (66).

8. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to Claim 7, further comprising a belt guide (73) disposed within a run of said drive belt (64) between said toothed pulley (62) and said toothed band (66).

9. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to Claim 8, wherein said belt guide (73) includes a curved dirt-stripper portion (75) adjacent a perimeter of said toothed band (66).

10. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to Claim 9, characterized in that said belt guide (73) and said dirt stripper portion (75) are mounted on a door (57) which can be opened to facilitate replacement of said drive belt (64).

11. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to any preceding Claim, characterized in that electrical contact between said attachment (14) and said vacuum cleaner (12) is automatically established when said attachment (14) is attached to said vacuum cleaner (12).

12. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to any preceding Claim, wherein said vacuum cleaner (12) includes a cordless source of electric power.

13. A vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) according to any preceding Claim, characterized in that said co-operating electrical connection means include at least one electrical conductor (48) which extends along said dust bowl (26) and which is provided with insulation on at least a part of said electrical conductor passing through portions of said dust bowl (26) wherein it may be contacted by material picked up by said vacuum cleaner.

14. In combination, a vacuum cleaner (12) and attachment (14) as claimed in any preceding Claim, and a base (184) therefor, characterized in that said base (184) comprises

a first portion for supporting said vacuum cleaner (12); and

a second portion for supporting said attachment (14);

wherein said second portion and said attachment (14) comprise first and second means for releasably retaining said attachment (14) in said base (184).

15. A combination according to Claim 14, characterized in that said first means comprises a latch tang (81) formed on a surface of said attachment (14);

said first engagement means includes a resilient latch member (198); and

said latch tang (81) and said resilient latch member (198) including co-operating means for frictional latching engagement when said agitator (14) is placed in said second portion of said base (184).

16. An assembly for retaining an element comprising:

first and second facing end surfaces (128);

first and second wheels (146);

said first and second wheels (146) each including a hub (154) and a flexible rim (150)

attached thereto;

means (152) for permitting substantial radial deflection of said rim (150);

contacting means (65) extending between hubs on said first and second wheels (146);

said contacting means (65) being effective for maintaining said first and second wheels at least a minimum distance apart;

each of said first and second facing end surfaces (128) including at least one retainer arm (132) and a hub guide (138);

said hub guide (138) including means (140) for permitting insertion of said hub (154) a predetermined distance along its respective end surface and for preventing further insertion;

said retainer arm (132) including means for deflecting said rim (150) radially inward as said hub is inserted into said hub guide; and

said hub guide (138) being positioned and dimensioned to permit partial outward radial expansion of said rim (150) when said hub is disposed said predetermined distance along its end surface whereby said wheel (146) is captured.

17. An assembly according to Claim 13, characterized in that said means for permitting substantial radial deflection of said rim (150) includes at least first and second spaced-apart spokes (152) connecting said hub (154) and said rim (150).

18. An assembly according to Claim 17, characterized in that at least some of said spokes (152) are at an angle to a radius of said wheel (146).

19. An assembly according to Claim 16, 17 or 18, characterized in that said contacting means (65) includes a spindle.

20. An assembly according to Claim 19, characterized in that each of said hubs (154) includes a septum (162); and

said spindle (65) includes first and second slots (178) fittable onto a respective septum (65), whereby said rod (65) is restrained from rotating relative to said wheels (146).

21. An assembly according to Claim 19 or 20, characterized in that it includes a cylindrical barrel (56) rotatably mounted on said spindle (65), and

at least one bushing (172) between said spindle (65) and said cylindrical brush (56).

22. An electrical contact assembly, comprising first and second separable parts (72, 72') which can be assembled face to face at a seam (87);

a slot (100) in at least one of said first and second separable parts (72, 72');

said slot (100) terminating at said seam (87);

a contact retainer (77);

said slot (100) and said contact retainer (77) including means for mutual sliding engagement (102, 104; 103, 105) whereby said contact retainer (77) is captured in said slot (100) when said first and second separable parts (72, 72') are assembled;

gripping means (110, 111, 112, 113) at at

least one end of said contact retainer (77) for gripping a metallic conductor (76); and

an end (114) of said metallic conductor (76) forming said electrical contact.

23. An electrical contact assembly comprising: 5
first and second separable parts (72, 72') which can be assembled face to face at a seam (87);

a first slot (100) in said first part (72) terminating at said seam (87); 10

a second slot (100') in said second part (72') terminating at said seam (87);

said first and second slots (100, 100') being aligned when said first and second separable parts (72, 72') are assembled, thereby forming a single elongated slot: 15

a contact retainer (77);

said first slot (100) and said contact retainer (77) including first means (102, 104; 103, 105) for mutual sliding engagement whereby said contact retainer (77) is insertable into said first part (72) before assembly of said first and second parts (72, 72'); 20

said second slot (100') and said contact retainer (77) including second means for mutual sliding engagement whereby said second part (72') may be assembled with said first part (72) with said contact retainer (77) captured in said single elongated slot; 25

first gripping means (110, 111, 112, 113) including first means for gripping a first metallic conductor (76); 30

a portion (114) of said first metallic conductor forming a first contact positioned by said first gripping means; 35

second gripping means at the opposite end of said contact retainer (77) fittable into said second slot (100'); 40

said second gripping means including second means for gripping a second metallic conductor; and 45

a portion of said second metallic conductor forming a second contact positioned by said second gripping means, whereby said first and second contacts are retained and positioned in said electrical appliance by said contact retainer. 50

24. Apparatus according to Claim 22 or 23, wherein said gripping means comprises a plurality of bosses (110, 111, 112, 113) which extend from said contact retainer (77). 55

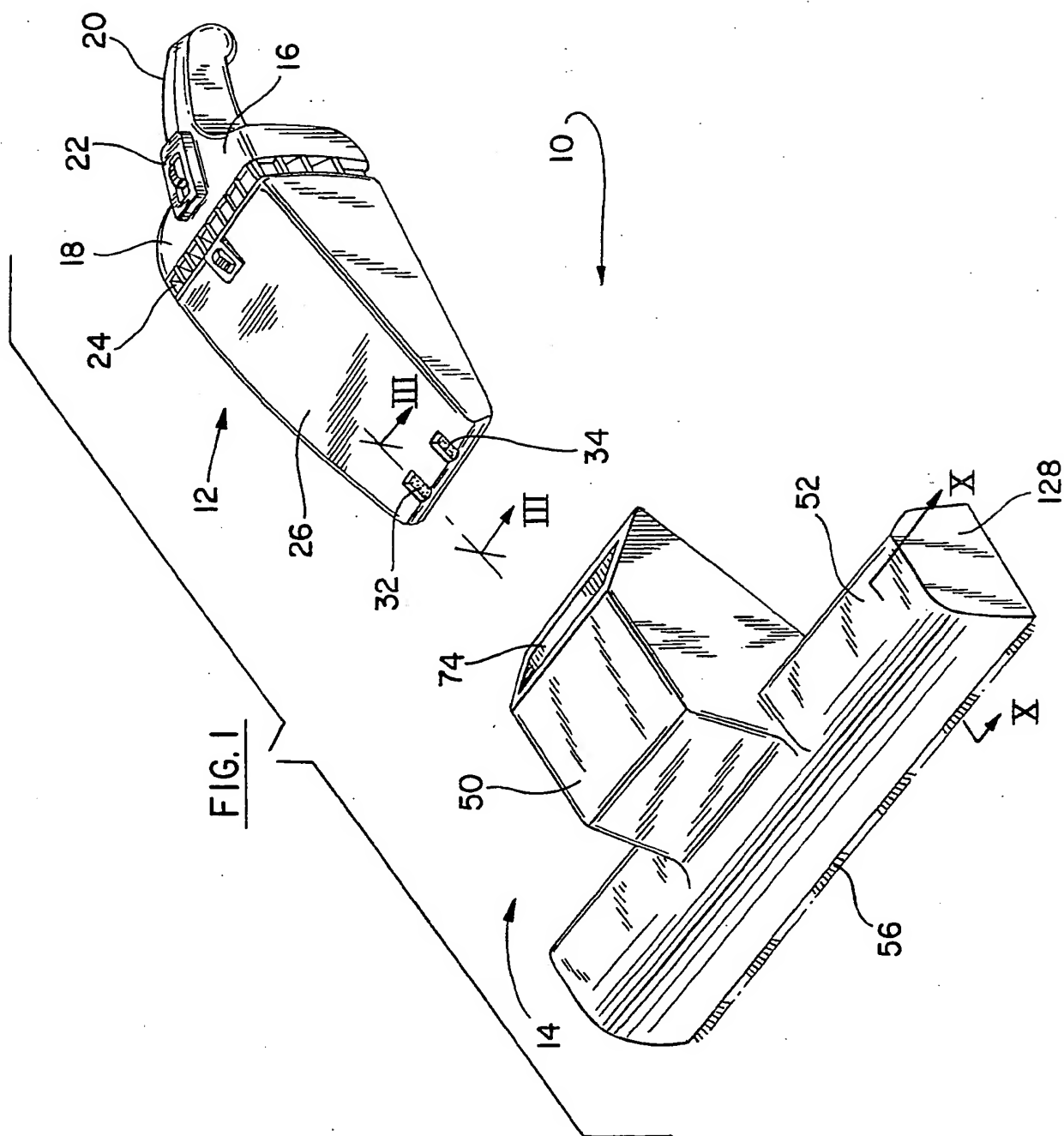
25. A vacuum cleaner (12) and an attachment (14) as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 15, characterized in that it is provided with an assembly as claimed in any one of Claims 16 to 21, and/or an electrical contact assembly as claimed in any one of Claims 22 to 24. 60

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FIG. 2

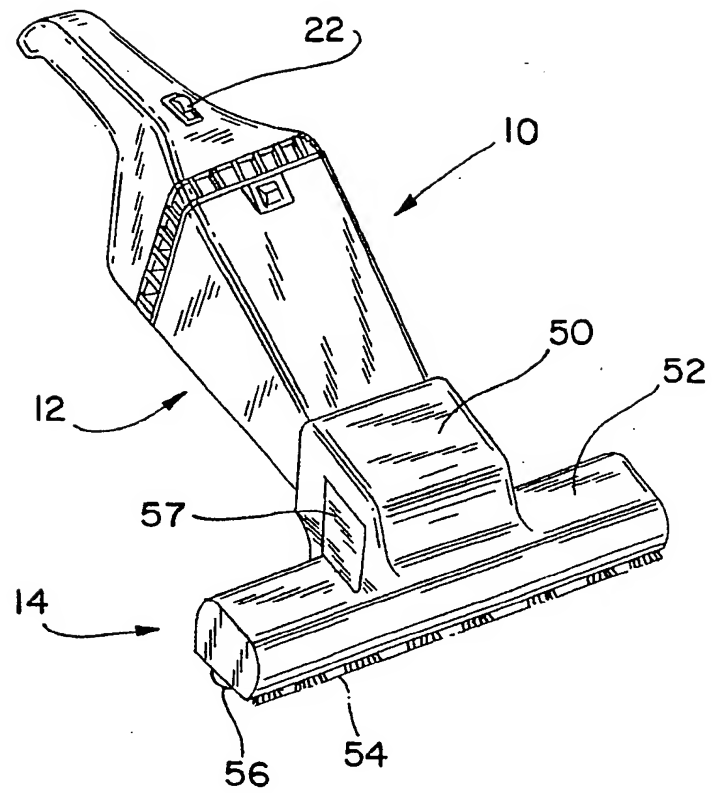
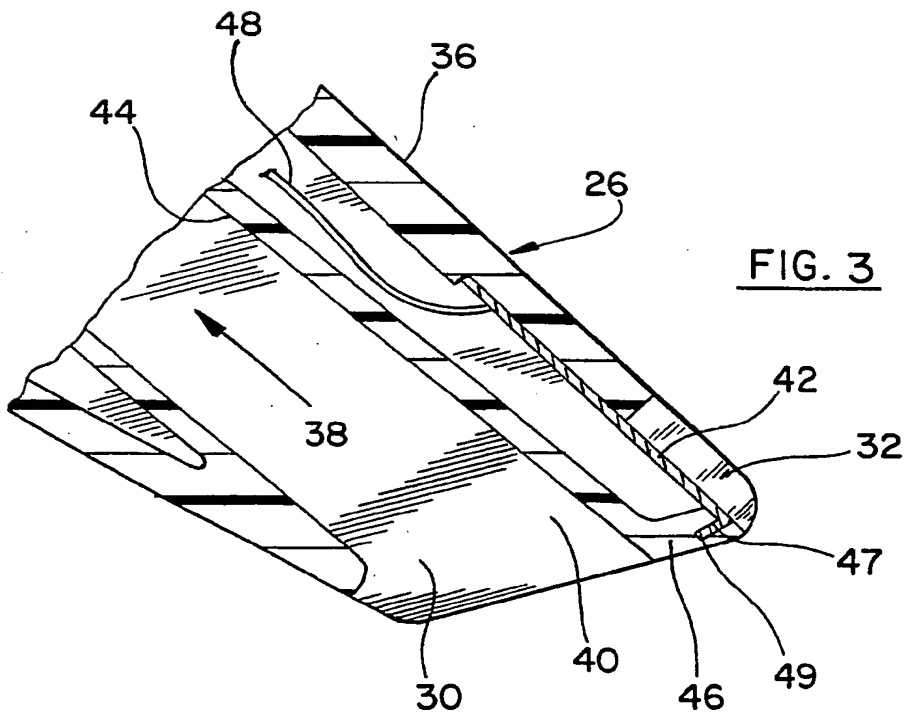


FIG. 3



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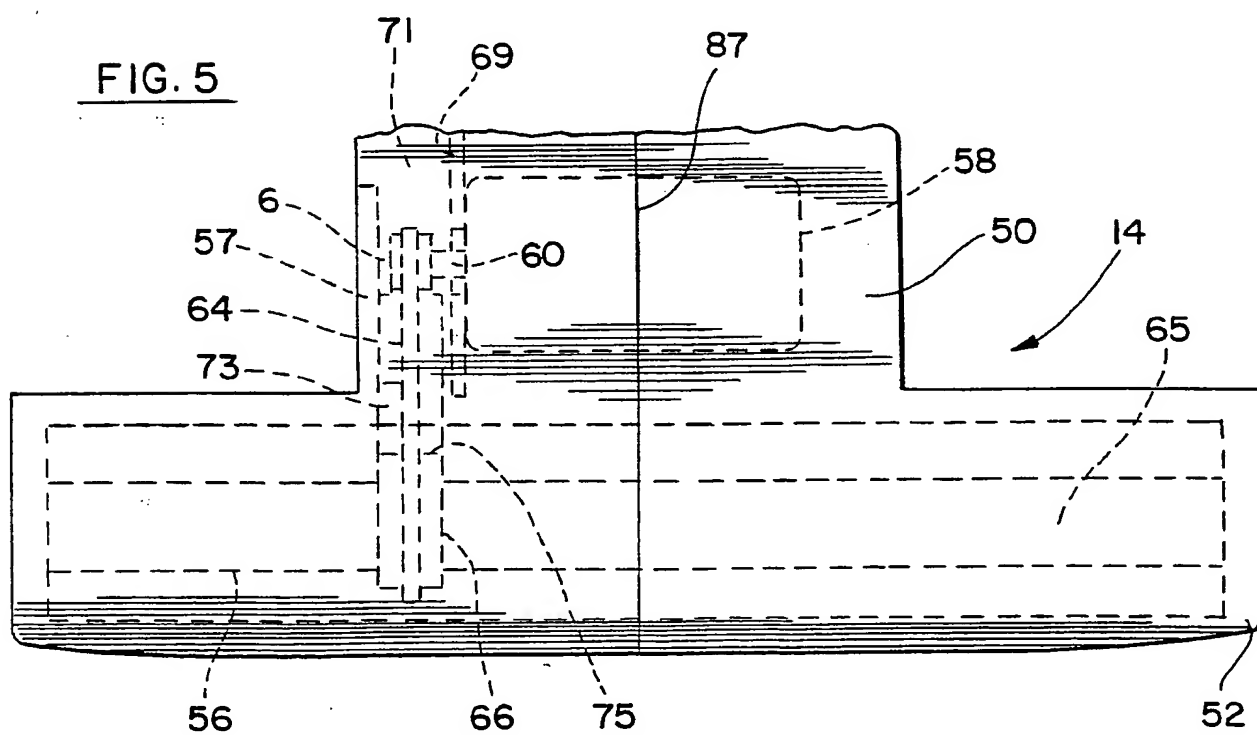
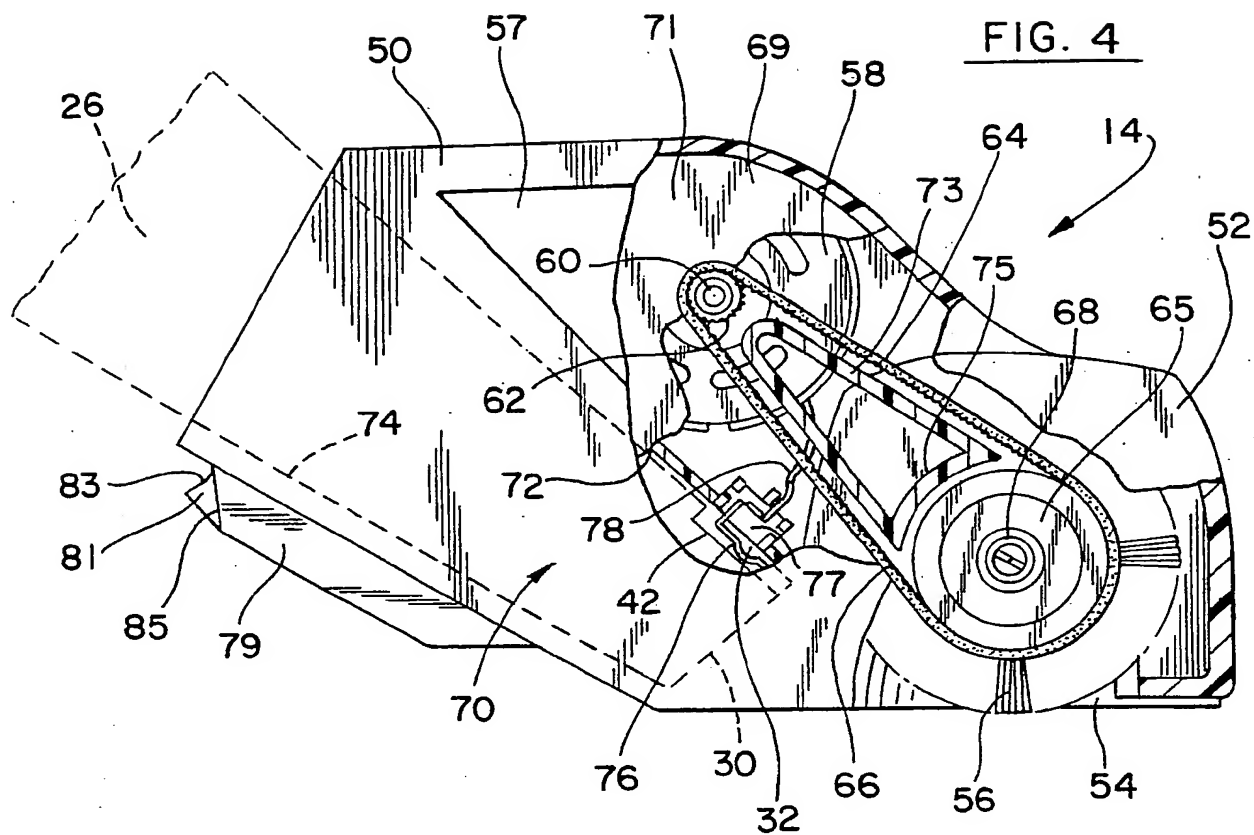


FIG. 8

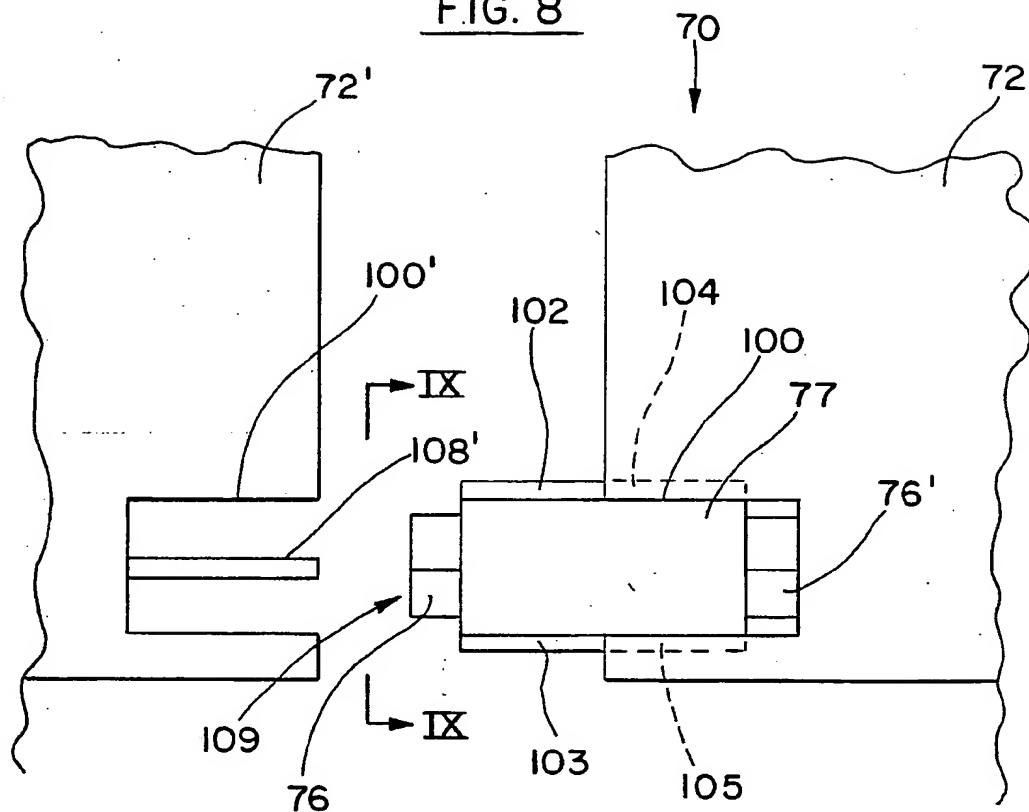
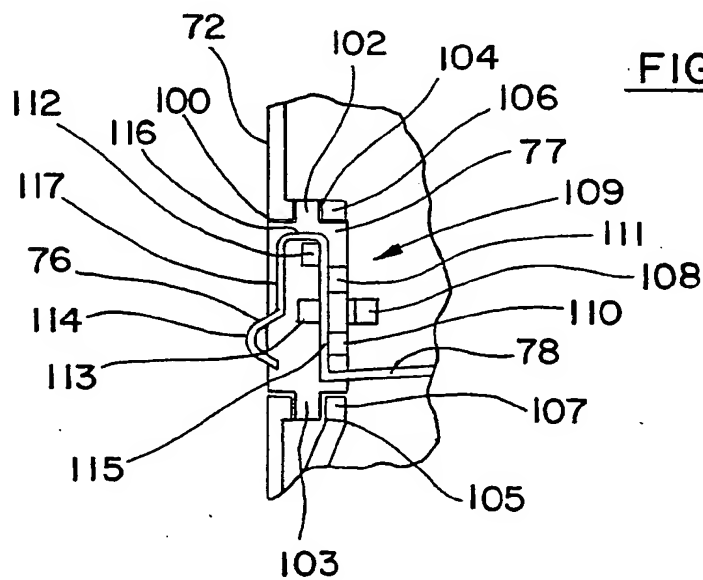


FIG. 9



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FIG. 10

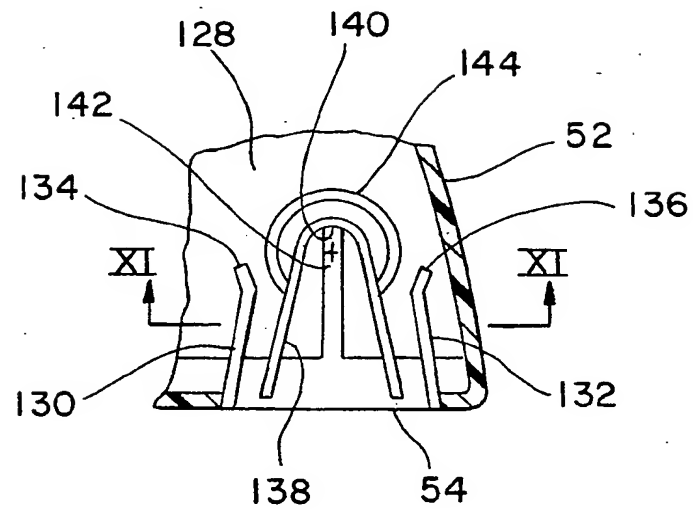
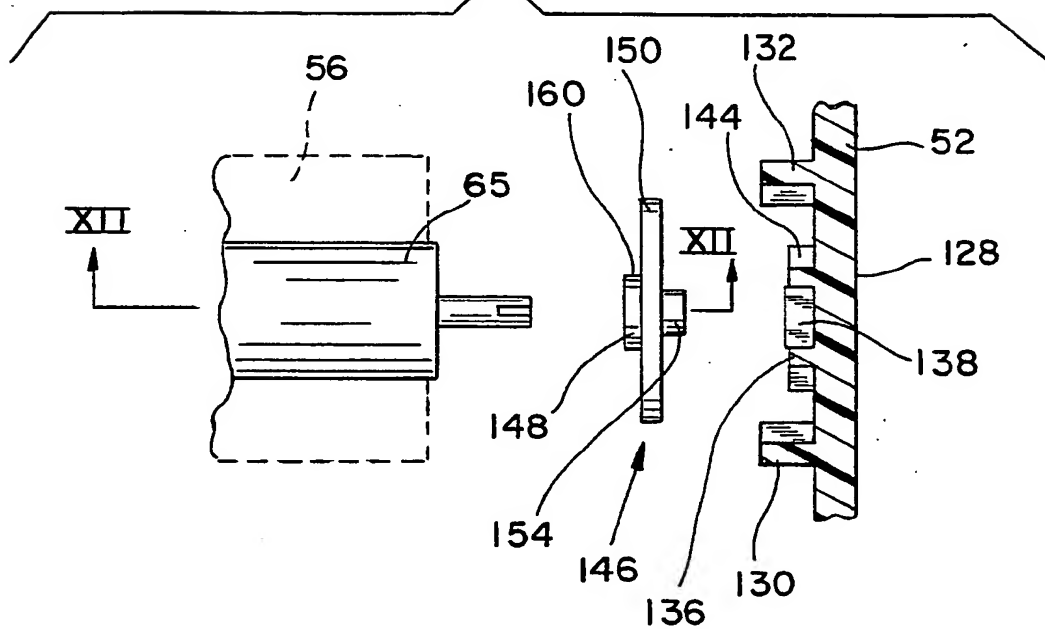
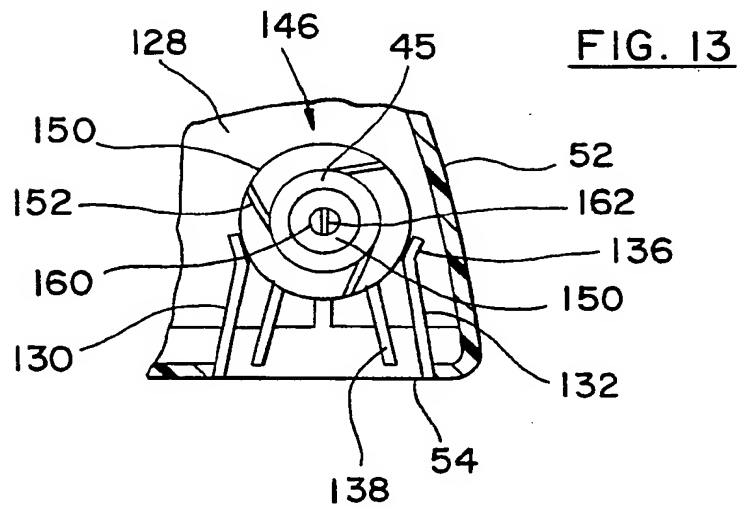
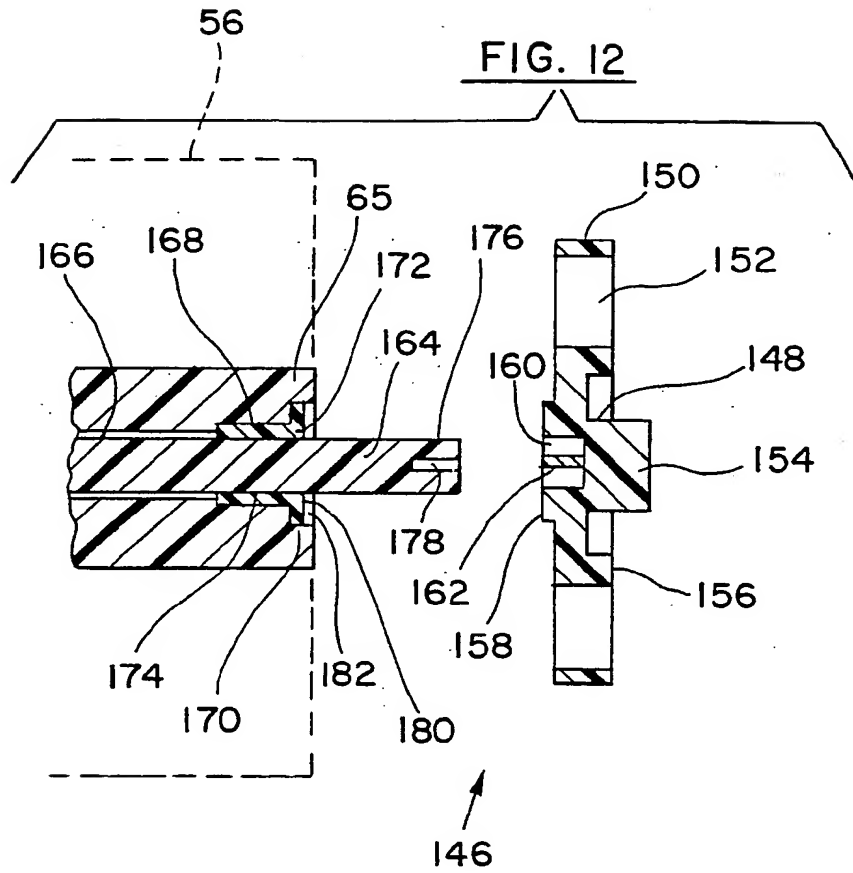


FIG. 11



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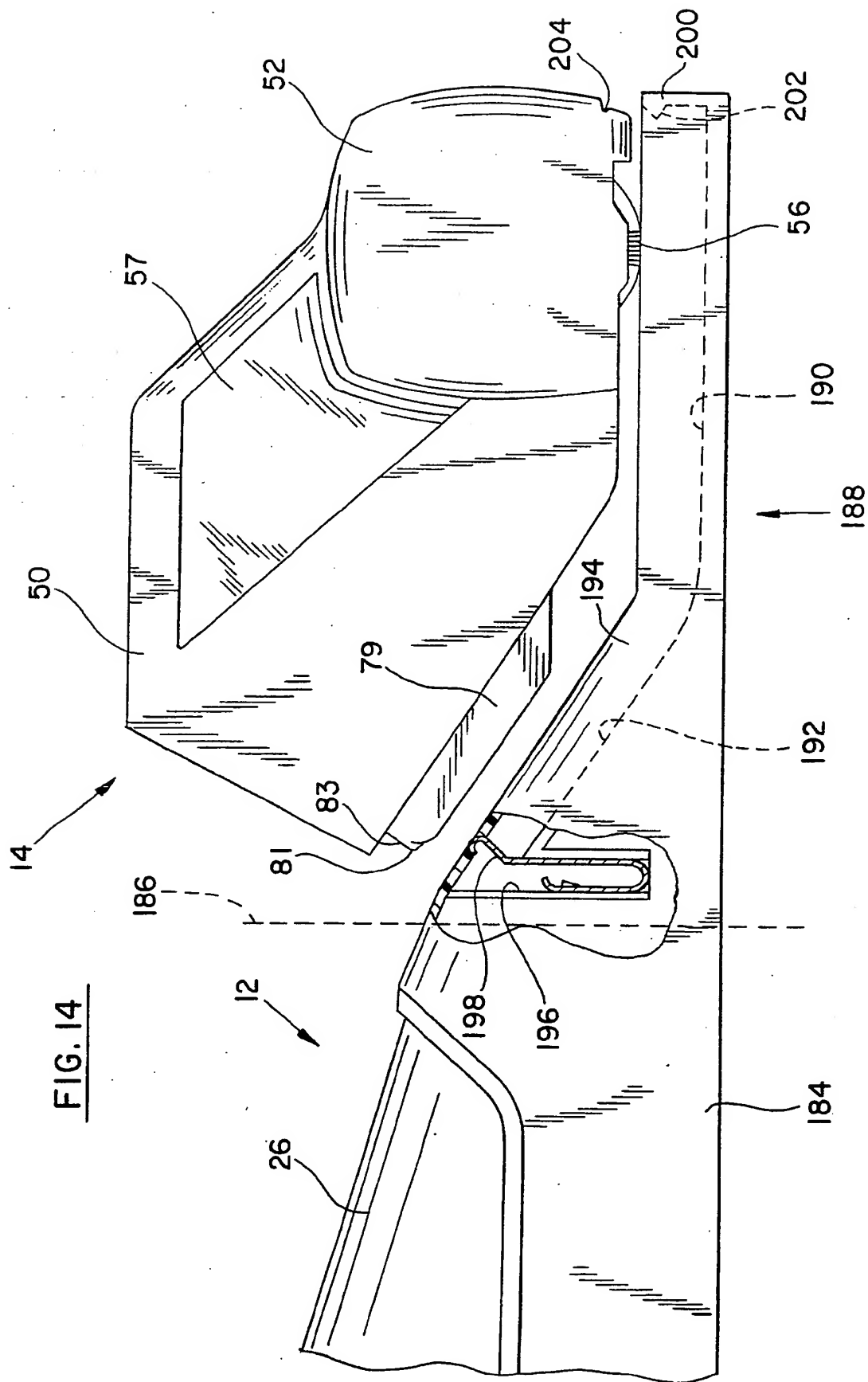
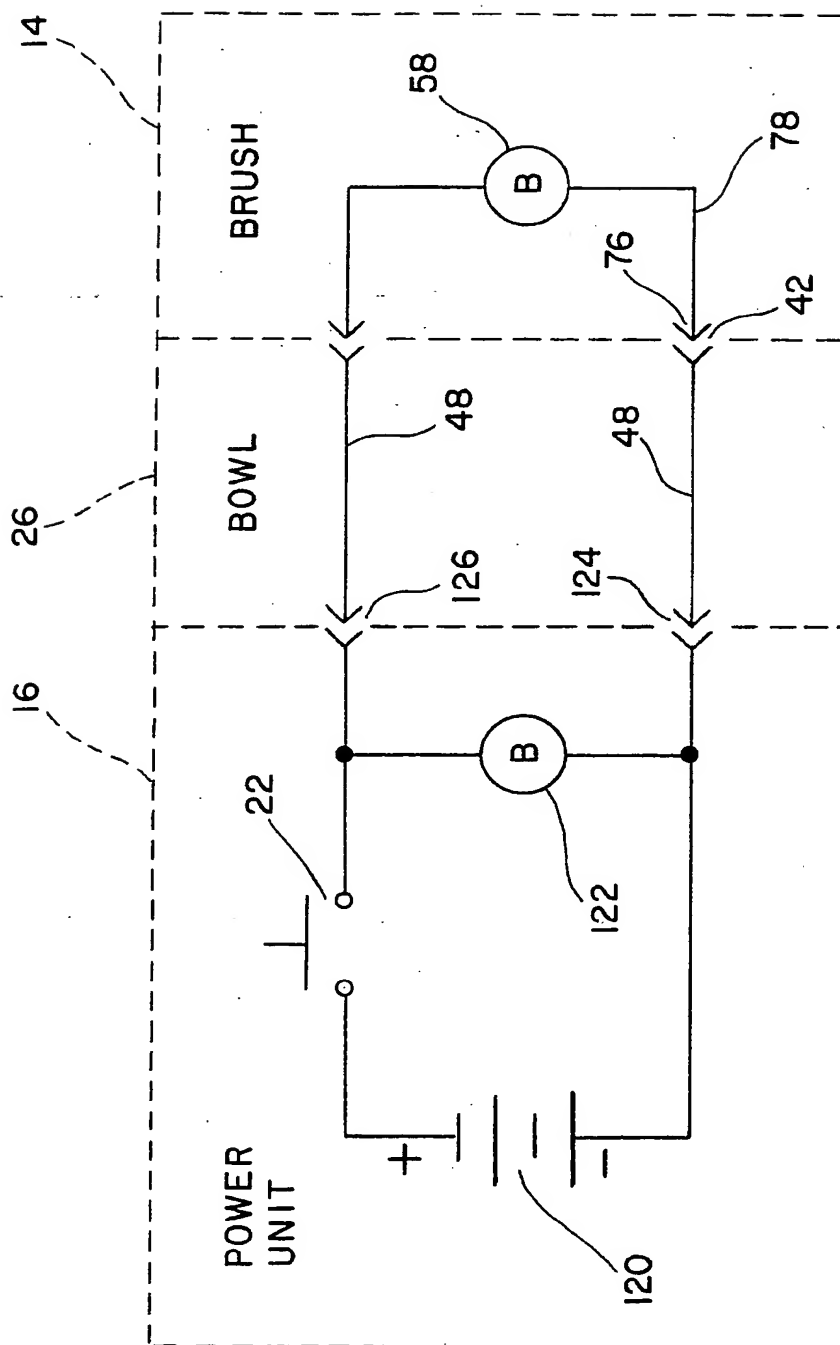


FIG. 15



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